Apart from the Joint Statement on Cooperation in emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases and surveillance, no other agreements were entered into during the recent visit of the Minister for Health and Family Welfare to USA.

Institute for checking quality of wheat and rice

†*255. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an Institute has been entrusted with the responsibility of testing the quality of wheat and rice lying in the stores of Food Corporation of India;

(b) if so, the name of the institute and the reasons for its selection; and

(c) the amount fixed for the institute for carrying on the responsibility and whether the above institute has been selected from a panel of institutes?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Shareholding pattern of VSP

*256. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the shareholding of Government in Visakhapatnam Steel Plant;

(b) the other investments or stakes in Visakhapatnam Steel Plant by Government;

(c) whether there is any proposal to transfer the stake of the Central Government to the State Government; and

(d) the details of the present value of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) The shareholding of the Government in Visakhapatnam Steel Plant is as under

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

		(Rs. Crores)
(i)	Equity share capital	Rs. 4,889.95
(ii)	7% Non-cumulative redeemable preference share capital	Rs. 2,937.47
		Rs. 7,827.42

(b) Apart from share capital, Government has no other investments in Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) No specific exercise has been made to assess the present value of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. However, as per the audited accounts, the net worth of the Company as on 31st March 2005, is Rs. 6,878.31 crores.

Procurement of materials by South East Central Railway

†*257. SHRIMATI KAMLA MANHAR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the zonal headquarters of South-East Central Railway located at Bilaspur has been fully empowered to procure various materials to be used in the said zone;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor and by when such powers will be delegated;

(c) whether any preference will be given to the State industries in the procurement of various materials to be used in this Zone, and initiative will be taken by the Railways for setting up the industry producing such materials in case such industries are not in existence at present; and

(d) whether this zone has approached the Government of Chhattisgarh in this regard, if so, when and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir. The General Manager of South-East Railway, Bilaspur has been delegated financial powers up to Rs. 15 crore for procurement of stores on par with the General Managers of other Zonal Railways. When the procurement value of stores exceeds Rs. 15 crore, purchases are approved by the Railway Board/Minister of State for Railways/Minister of Railways.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.